

Christ Our King
Kristen Fisher -- 2024-11-07

INTRODUCTION: We welcomed back Kristen Fisher for the fourth time as she gave a beautiful talk/reflection on Christ our King. This talk was timely, occurring two days after a presidential election ending a difficult election season marked by heated rhetoric, impassioned viewpoints, great division among parties, within families, within social and professional circles. There is a sense that life as we know it is hanging in the balance. In an election marked by similar turmoil, (Bush/Gore in 2000, which was finally decided by the Supreme Court after over a month of uncertainty), the first election Kristen voted in, she was feeling more and more anxious, until an older woman, a refugee from behind the Iron Curtain, came to her almost as a prophet and asked “Is Jesus King or is He not?” This question brought her out of her downward spiral and reminded her that in spite of everything happening in our world, Jesus Our King forever sits on His throne. Kristen had unintentionally taken her great desire for our country to be a place of love, of justice, of mercy, of truth and of good, and in her mind had decided that our political leaders would be the ones to move these causes forward. Her friend set her straight. Every election cycle since then, she asks herself her friend’s question. We are tempted to put kingship on the shoulders of people who can never be our kings, whether they want to or not.

GIVE US A KING: God wanted to be the King of His people, but in 1 Samuel 8:6, the Israelites wanted a king like the other nations had, they wanted a king to fight their battles, to deliver justice and makes decisions, and they wanted a king they could see and was more like them. God granted them their wish even though it was a terrible request and quickly led to imperfect kings and a forever divided kingdom. But God made a promise to David, the second of the three imperfect kings, that there would be a King whose Kingdom would reign forever, and He would never be defeated. The Israelites thought this would be another human king like David. Many refused to see Jesus as this king because He was not what they thought the king should and could be. Sometimes we can miss Him because God does not operate in the way we want Him too, because He is God and we are not.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN THAT JESUS IS KING? It is both better and different. And what does it mean that Jesus is OUR king? Jesus is THE King of Heaven and earth, but it does not necessarily follow that He is OUR King. He gave us freedom so that we might love Him – freedom is required to love, but it also means we might choose not to love. We all have “interior castles,” as defined by the mystic St. Teresa of Avila, with a central throne room and someone or something sits on that throne at all times. This is true even for atheists. Something is almighty, something dictates what we believe and how we behave. And if it is not Jesus, it is a tyrant. Kristen then addressed three ways (among many more) that Christ is the King and our King. These ways are distinct from what we see in kings of the world.

Jesus lives among us: “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14). God is a King who dwells among us, not like most kings, who live remotely from their subjects and do not mingle with them except on rare occasions. Our King wants not only to be with us, but wants to be one of us. He makes Himself ridiculously accessible! We see it in the incarnation, we see it in Bethlehem, house of bread, foreshadowing the Eucharist, born among the poor, born in a town of regular people in the middle of a census, in the middle of the Roman Empire, in the middle of chaos and suffering. We have a King who is a great high king, but who does not stay in great high places. What does this mean for each of us specifically? He dwelt among us, He traveled among us, He stayed with us. The most powerful way we know this is true is the Eucharist. He dwells within us. So, we have a King who is sovereign and who deserves our respect and yet who makes Himself small so we can access Him.

Jesus protects and rescues us: The Israelites wanted a visible king to protect and rescue them, not an invisible King that required their trust only. Kings protect their kingdom and their people, but typically they do it for selfish reasons, to keep their power and wealth and standing. In a worldly kingdom, a citizen who goes against the king becomes an enemy, a traitor. And it is the king’s job to protect the kingdom from this enemy. In most earthly kingdoms, this is a good thing, but in the case of Christ our King, we have become traitors because of our sin. Yet Jesus protects the Kingdom by dying for us, the traitors, the ones who betrayed Him. Instead of seeing us as being in league with the enemy, He sees us as those who need to be rescued from the enemy. Has there ever

been a King so in love? Kristen spent some time discussing the Passion of our Lord, and the excruciating pain He endured throughout, always for us, and for us individually. She recalled sitting in a church, contemplating a particularly graphic crucifix, and hearing the Lord say in her heart, “for you.” So, the King of Kings, the Lord of lords, the Mighty One, Creator of Heaven and earth died in the place of a traitor to save traitors. He gives His life so we might perhaps choose to love Him, Who first loved us. And because He is who He is, He dies, but He does not stay dead. He rises again and He forgives and He offers mercy, and He offers eternal life in Heaven.

Jesus gives us a share in His Kingdom: “The earth is the Lord’s and everything in it, the world and all who live in it” (Psalm 24:1) ... He invites us to experience His Kingship now. We are citizens of an earthly place, yet we are dual citizens, because we are citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven too. We are allowed to participate in His Kingdom. In this world, everything in a kingdom belongs to the king – everything belongs to the state. There is some truth to this statement in Jesus’ Kingdom as well. ALL belong to Him, but He is generous and shares all with us. He asks us to use all He shares with us for the good of the Kingdom. Kristen finds the beatitude “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven” (Matt 6:21) a challenging one. To be poor in spirit is to recognize our poverty in reality even if we have material wealth. Nothing is actually ours. Everything we have is a gift from God, it is on loan and to be shared. It is for us, and for the Kingdom. This is not true in earthly kingdoms. If we want to be part of the Kingdom of Heaven, we need to be poor in spirit. He gives us generous gifts for our own good and for the good of others. The King could control us, but does not because He wants us to actually love Him, and so He gives us free will, knowing full well that we might use this very gift He gives us to love to do something other than love, to walk away. The only way love can be real is for Him to give us the choice.

HOLD EVERYTHING LOOSELY IN THE KINGDOM: We hold everything loosely, because ultimately all belongs to Him, the King. Kristen brought up Job, a righteous man, who Satan insisted was so only because he was blessed. Would we respond as Job did when God allows Satan to take everything from him, his children, his servants, his livestock, his home? Job asks God why, and God answers and in His own words tells him He is King. And Job responds: “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord” (Job 1:21). In the Kingdom of God in this world, His Kingdom is here, but it is not yet fully here; The Kingdom is here, but it is also coming. This is our experience. Sometimes tragedies happen in this world. We do not always understand what He is about, but like Job, we need to trust Him that He is always working for good. Will we hold all loosely so that when He removes something from our hands, from our hearts, from our lives, we can trust that there is more to come, and it might not come in this life? Through the incarnation, He has shown us that everything for His glory is always for our good, and everything for our good is for His glory. Our good and His glory are forever wed in the person of Jesus Christ, our King. The Lord does not conquer through violence or force, but through love and invitation. And the gifts He gives us, even the gift of suffering, are meant for our own good, and also as an invitation for more people. We serve as His emissaries. He invites us to trust that He will provide for us what we need, even if He asks us to give up something we think we may need. The Kingdom of God has no walls. We are His Kingdom if we allow Him to sit on the throne of our hearts. He has every right to that throne, but He will not invade the throne. Sometimes, we wish He would! He respects our freedom. Jesus stands at the door of His palace and knocks on His own door, asking US to let Him in.

CONCLUSION: In these times of very real turmoil, we are citizens of a Kingdom that is not impacted or dethroned by the turmoil. Let us recall the many Christians who came before us for 2000 years, many of whom lived in terrible times and places, with terrible laws, and terrible tyrants. They were able to experience the beatitude of the Kingdom, because no matter who Caesar was, or who the king or queen or the emperor, or president was, Christ was King. We are invited to be first citizens of the Kingdom, and to bring the Kingdom with us into our world, to use everything that has been given to us at the service of the King. We are invited to draw close to the One who draws close to us, particularly in the Eucharist. Through baptism, original sin is washed away, and yet we keep dethroning the King, and becoming traitors every time we sin. And every time we go to reconciliation, what Jesus won for us once and for always on the cross, is offered to us over and over again, the mercy, the forgiveness, the welcome home. We have a King who knows us, who loves us, who sees us, and who wants to be with us in eternity.